

**Amendments to the Drawings:**

The attached sheet of drawings includes changes to Figs. 8 and 9, the addition of reference numerals to these figures. This sheet, which includes Figs. 7, 8 and 9, will replace the original sheet of these figures upon approval by the Examiner. An annotated sheet is also attached. Once approved by the Examiner, a new formal drawing will be provided if necessary.

Attachment:           Annotated Sheet Showing Changes  
                              Replacement Sheet

### **REMARKS/ARGUMENTS**

Claims 1 - 3 are pending in the application.

Claim 1 has been amended. The Examiner has offered rejections against Claims 1 - 3. The rejections are respectfully traversed in light of the amendments and arguments contained herein.

The Examiner has rejected Claims 1, 2, and 3 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over newly cited U.S. Patent No. 5,952,592 to Teel in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,406,874 to Witchel. The Applicant respectfully traverses the rejections. The Examiner has presented Teel as disclosing "a brace bar comprising a narrow portion having a cross-section with a profile of which at least one side extends vertically upward to a position of a predetermined height, thus forming a lower base part (see Figure 2)." The Examiner notes that Teel does not disclose the "specific use of a brace bar that is bent inward at said position toward a center of the brace bar, and: thereafter, extends upward while being inclined at a predetermined inclination angle to form a tapered upper end." Instead the Examiner offers the combination with Witchel which she notes as disclosing "the use of a brace bar that is bent inward at said position toward a center of the brace bar, and: thereafter, extends upward while being inclined at a predetermined inclination angle to form a tapered upper part (see Figure 2). Witchel teaches a brace bar having sides that extend vertically upward while inclined to a top of the brace bar (Fig. 2) for supporting and attaching to a soundboard (14)."

The Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection. With regard to the Teel reference, newly amended claim 1 now sets forth a lower base part that is bent inward at the position of the pre-determined height toward a center of the brace bar

thereby forming an upper surface of said lower base part, and, thereafter, extending upward while being inclined at a predetermined inclination angle to form a tapered upper part. Neither Teel nor Witchel teach an upper surface to a lower base part.

In view of the arguments and amendments listed above, the combinations of the references cited do not disclose the entire apparatus as claimed. Further, there is no teaching or suggestion in either reference to combine the references. Additionally, with respect to Witchel, the reference, related to a melamine sheet guitar, depicts in its Figs. 7 and 8, cribbing that is essentially L-shaped with concave curvature on the outer-facing side and curve-easing cuts into the cribbing at intervals along the length of the cribbing strip. Witchel, therefore, suffers from the same difference from the present application's invention as does the previously cited Stephens as discussed in the prior responses, that the "angle" referenced by the Examiner is instead a concave curve. Therefore every limitation of Applicant's present claims cannot be present in the combination of the cited art references. As a result, the claims of the present invention are not obvious, and the Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw her rejections and place the application in line for allowance.

The Applicant has attempted to be fully responsive to the office action, and believes the claims should now be in line for allowance. However, if the Examiner

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Reply to Office Action of March 27, 2006

feels that it would be helpful, the undersigned would very much appreciate a telephone call in order to discuss any outstanding issues and expedite placement of the application into condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert W. Becker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

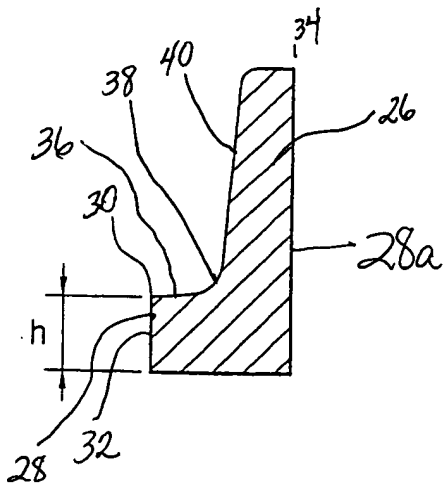
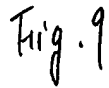
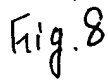
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RWB:KCF:mac

Attachments



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references deleted